



Newsletter

Our Mission

To empower marginalised communities in the Mekong Sub-Region to shape their own future. We achieve this by working with communities to improve health and education for children and socioeconomic opportunities for families.

Our principles

Focus on the needs of the beneficiaries

Promote and protect the rights of the child

Use resources efficiently and effectively

Acknowledge and value diversity

Maintain full transparency and accountability

Reflect on and continually improve our work

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An effective aid/community development worker

- 1) Having a passionate heart, good relationships, and necessary respect
- 2) Having a good understanding of the background context
- 3) Having clear objectives
- 4) Being able to effectively transfer appropriate skills
- 5) Being reflective, flexible, creative, patient and generally relaxed

Personally, I am not a man who believes in categorizing people's characteristics for the sake of understanding somebody's qualities. But when I heard about the five key attributes of an effective aid or community development worker last year during a Participatory Project Management workshop in Singapore, I was intrigued. How is it possible to attribute the success of something so highly complex like community development to five main characteristics of a person? I decided to observe this in my day-to-day life while working with our staff, communities, partner organizations, consultants and donors.

I realized that it is rare that someone possesses all these characteristics in a well balanced manner. Therefore, I believe that the success of any kind of development work depends on strong teamwork to leverage on the strengths of team members while compensating for their weaknesses. I also realized that the attributes mentioned in point 1 and 5 in the above box, which focus on a successful community development worker's personality, are the most important ones since they cannot be learned. If missing, this can result in the failure of achieving the objectives.

With civil society growing it is not surprising that increasingly more people are being drawn into the non-profitable sector for exactly the reason it does not stand for, namely profit. New 'business' models are being developed and new methods created to monitor and evaluate the impact and sustainability of community development. Unfortunately the personality-related attributes mentioned above are often ignored as they cannot be measured or rationalized. It seems like the whole civil society is undergoing a scrutinizing audit by an army of business-

minded profit-seekers who try to unscrupulously link the top of the income pyramid with its bottom. Their value proposition might be valid but only if implemented correctly. I agree with a higher degree of transparency and professionalism in civil society but I disagree if governance overpowers meaning because it creates additional and unnecessary obstacles to successful community development. In addition, these NGO-freeloaders often lack the necessary background context of the beneficiaries, which leaves them with only one of the five key attributes: clear objectives.

It is important to have clear objectives when doing community development but it is equally important to realize that these objectives are not stable. They need continuous adjustment to reflect changing needs of beneficiaries. We are working in developing countries and as the word 'developing' suggests, the communities within these countries are evolving. So do their needs. To realize this, one needs to be on the ground, have good relationships with the beneficiary communities and a solid understanding of their social situation.

It makes me sad to see that insightful field visits are being replaced with endless written reports, implementation schedules and deadlines. As Child's Dream grew we increasingly noticed this phenomenon. Since we are not willing to jeopardize our low administrative cost ratio and efficient structure, we will not build up additional overhead to cope with the increasing reporting requirements. Instead let's work together with mutual respect and trust to find the most efficient way to effectively address the needs of beneficiaries.

By Daniel Siegfried (Co-Founder)

Our New Structure

As mentioned in our August 2009 newsletter, we have changed our organizational structure. This structure is now fully implemented. Our three focus groups 'Health', 'Basic Education' and 'Higher Education' replaced our previous 'country teams'. Since the problems and issues we address all over the region are similar in nature, a focus group approach makes our work more efficient and effective.

Health

The programmes in our Health focus group aim at reducing childhood mortality and allow children to participate in education. About 22% of our financial resources were spent in this focus group in 2009. Currently the following three programmes are run by 'Health':

- *Malaria Control Programme*
40'000 Burmese are protected from Malaria by a comprehensive programme providing mosquito nets, treatment and education. We run this programme in the 4th year already. The yearly budget for this programme is USD 135'000.
- *Basic Health Interventions for Children*
50'000 children under the age of 12 years receive vitamin A and de-worming treatment. 5'800 children below the age of 14 receive vaccinations. 40'000 Burmese are being taken care of by over 200 village health workers. The yearly budget for this programme is USD 200'000.
- *Children Medical Fund*
Since its establishment in early 2007, more than 600 Burmese children have received life-saving operations and treatment in Thai health facilities. We earmarked an amount of USD 300'000 for running this programme in 2010.

Basic Education

Our projects in the Basic Education focus group aim at offering basic education to everyone to improve literacy rates and create alternatives to exploitation. Over the years we have built more than 50 nursery, primary and secondary schools educating more than 10'000 students all over the region. More than 600 children stay in our 10 boarding houses allowing them to attend classes regularly. More than 60'000 students have received school supplies. We consider 'Basic Education' to be the core of our work and last year 45% of our resources were spent here.

Higher Education

This focus group creates opportunities for better employment and income generation, knowledge and skill transfers as well as community capacity building. 72 academically strong students are currently studying at universities in Thailand and Hong Kong. Another 380 bright, mostly younger, students study in our three colleges in two Burmese refugee camps along the Thai-Burmese border. Over 20 students receive soft skills trainings that increase their job prospects and provide them with suitable internships options. 33% of our total resources were allocated to Higher Education in 2009.

As you can see, together with the Basic Education focus group, a total of 78% of our donations were spent on education in 2009. This underlines our strong belief that education is the cornerstone of sustainable development of every community.

Our latest activities

Tungluang Wattanakarn Boarding House, Thailand

Tungluang is located in Pangmapha district, Mae Hong Son province, Thailand. Approximately 110 students from three villages are currently attending classes in the Tungluang Wattanakarn School that was established 1993. It mainly offers education to underprivileged children who do not have a Thai ID card. Some of them are even coming from inside Burma. Since two of the villages are quite far away and walking to the school and back every day would not be possible, about 50 of the children stay as boarders in Tuanglung during the week. However, the condition of the current boarding is more than bad and does not offer the necessary safety anymore. Besides, it is too small.



We agreed to support the construction of a new larger boarding house (10x8.5m2) with two dormitories and four toilets. We will hire a local contractor who will manage the actual construction work and will pay him in three installments. The school provides the construction plan, whereas the villagers of the community lend themselves for unskilled labour. The material will be bought in Mae Hong Son as well as Chiang Mai.

The school gets support from other institutions: 'Save the Children' Thailand supports an assistant teacher for creative and handicraft training, while the local government is providing a daily milk ration for the kids. The 'Center for Child Development' recently built a playground for the kindergarten children.

We expect the construction work to finish by the end of April 2010 with a budget of THB 392,865 (approx. USD 11,900).

This boarding house is financed by the Julius Baer Foundation. Thank you very much!

Gae Lae Secondary School, Laos

This secondary school, which is a governmental school, was opened only two years ago. Due to the small budget for the construction of the school, which was released by the Laotian government, the building was too small from the beginning to accommodate the 160 students who are coming from 27 surrounding villages. And the students from grade 6 and 7 are not counted yet, since the school has - due to the lack of space - no possibility to offer these grades as well.

The community has built two additional classrooms (more like temporary shelters) out of their own initiative, which from a safety point of view are not suitable and have to be replaced.



We agreed to build a school which accommodates six classrooms and four toilets. Going forward, grades 6 and 7 will be offered as well. The Laotian government will continue to support the school by hiring the teachers and providing the teaching materials, including salaries.

The villagers will contribute themselves to construction by providing wood for the roof, for furniture, for a balcony, for window frames and for the doors. A professional construction team headed by a foreman will manage the actual construction work. All required construction materials can be sourced and transported from Pakse. The construction site can be accessed by car, however, the road to the village is in a very bad condition.

We target to complete this secondary school by February 2011.

This school is financed by Traumfaenger Stiftung, Davos, Switzerland. Thank you very much!

Trapieng Krabao Primary School, Cambodia

Trapieng Krabao primary school started off in 2006 as classes were taught by unqualified teachers in a villager's house. In 2007 villagers contributed wood and land to build a temporary school which consisted of two classrooms. The building had a roof of zinc and walls made from coconut palm leaves. Soon the increasing number of attending students forced the villagers to build an even more basic extension of the school

building. The structure of the whole building is very weak and was thought to be a temporary solution only. Therefore the security of the children cannot be assured anymore and a new building is urgently needed.

The school has currently three teachers. Since it is a government school, the government will provide additional skilled teachers and pay their salaries after a proper building is established. On top of that, breakfast



for the students is being supported by World Food Program.

We agreed to build a new school with five classrooms as well as two toilets. Furthermore we will build a flag pole, an entry gate and will provide new furniture. The villagers will contribute themselves to construction by leveling the land, building the school fence, filling up the foundation as well as preparing the road for transportation of the construction material. A professional contractor will provide the team and manage the actual construction work under the supervision of the school construction committee. All required construction materials can be sourced in Chikreng District or in Siem Reap (approx. 20km respectively 44km away) and transported to the construction site by car.

We target to complete this school by October 2010.

Project/Programme Updates

School in Loi Tai Leng, Shan State, Burma

Finally! The school opening took place at the beginning of January 2010! Students, parents, teachers, local officers – everybody was there to join the ceremony and celebrate this special day. 810 students are currently attending classes, both primary and high school, and 31 teachers are taking care of them. Construction started back in 2008 and was delayed many times due to transportation and logistical problem. We are therefore more than happy to have finally completed this new infrastructure.

Basic Health Interventions for Children (BHIC), Burma

Most of the displaced people from the conflict in July 2009 moved to one of the official temporary shelters (refugee camps) along the border. However, despite the ongoing conflicts in some target areas the programme has been progressing well. During the second half of 2009 the programme's 205 village health workers conducted over 40,000 home visits in 136 villages to prevent and manage childhood diarrhea as well as deliver additional services for malaria and acute respiratory infection. During the same period more than 6,000 children aged 14 years or below were immunized against eight diseases whereas approximately 37,000 children received Vitamin A and de-worming medicine.

People

At the end of last year, Kimsorn has left our Cambodian office to take up a new challenge in another organization. Two young team members have since joined our Siem Reap operation: Ms. Savrann Vann was originally a volunteer for some months and now holds a



permanent position as an "Assistant Field Coordinator" since the beginning of March 2010. A second new team member in Cambodia is our new "Assistant Programme Coordinator" Mr. Sinoeuy My who always has a smile on his face. A warm welcome to both our new team members!



Ursula Bisig has been volunteering with us again in January and February 2010 to get a taste of what's lying ahead. As of 1st May 2010, Ursula - our long lasting secretary of Child's Dream Association in Switzerland - will



act as our new "Controller" supporting Marc's team. She is about to relocate to Chiang Mai as we write this newsletter and we are very much looking forward to having another experienced team member on board. Welcome Ursula!



Ayu Chuepa (nickname Lee) who had started working for our project team immediately after his graduation from university in January 2007, has left us last month to become an entrepreneur! Yes, Lee opened his own business "Akha Ama" (www.akhaama.com)! With seed capital from our "Social Entrepreneur Grant Programme" - SEG - he created a business platform for small independent coffee farmers in the North of Thailand.

He facilitates the marketing side for these farmers and enables access to international fair trade markets. We are very proud of him and of course wish him all the best of stamina, luck and success! We will miss him dearly, but then we have also found a new Chiang Mai hangout for our special espresso shots, the new Akha Ama coffee bar! We will write more about the new SEG programme in our August 2010 newsletter.

Volunteers

Child's Dream has a long history of hosting volunteers who have been greatly supporting us. In the last seven years, there must have been roughly 50 volunteers working with us in either one of our projects or our offices in Siem Reap or Chiang Mai. Between the 1st January and the 30th March 2010 alone, a group of eight skilled, professional volunteers have "donated" 59 full working weeks (or 2360 working hours) to us. If we project this fantastic support to the end of 2010, this adds up to five "full time equivalents", so five qualified staff members working for us 100% for free.

Volunteering gives enthusiastic people the opportunity to experience something entirely new in a totally new environment. But accepting volunteers also puts responsibility on the host organization. Bad preparation and wrong expectations can lead to unpleasant experiences on both sides of this equation. We put as much emphasis as we can on communicating well with potential volunteers before they join us. We have determined a minimum number of months that volunteers must commit to support us since our work is complex and needs quite an introduction period. On rare occasions we accept volunteers for shorter periods of time, particularly if they are seasoned professionals and have a lot of experience in their respective fields. We have recently revised our volunteer process and have updated many documents on volunteering on our website. We also place specific volunteer vacancies on our webpage. We are actually right now looking for a volunteer who can help us with our annual reports 2010 in early 2011. Are you a newsletter reader skilled in finance and controlling? If you are interested, have a look here:

<http://www.childsdream.org/index.php?id=53>.

Getting a break

Daniel was the first one to go on a Child's Dream "sabbatical" for six weeks during January and February this year. He spent a wonderful and relaxing time with his sister exploring New Zealand in a camper van and he fully recharged his batteries. Having founded Child's Dream together with Marc seven years ago, it was 'high time' to get a real break. We are glad to have him back though, particularly Marc, since we had cut off Daniel from any access to e-mail and Child's Dream information which triggered a lot of extra work.

Come and visit us

We have had about 18 people or small groups of people visiting us in Chiang Mai since the beginning of this year. This is outstanding proof of genuine and sincere interest in our work. They all took the effort to come and see us and this despite Chiang Mai not really being at any central location on anyone's usual routing. A big thank you to all our visitors! It is always a privilege for us to bring our very special world a bit closer to all of you.

Additional ways to donate

We have just added Diners Club to our credit card donation facility. Donations are welcome in USD/EUR/CHF and soon GBP. Furthermore, we have introduced an online credit card facility for our sister organization *diversethics* Foundation www.diversethics-foundation.org. Please visit our websites for more information.

The temperatures are rising...

.....and we are looking for a new fridge! "Summer" in Chiang Mai means March/April/May and temperatures around 40° Celsius. On some days even above this. Well, seriously, what we are looking for is a 'cooling box/tool' for our server in the office, our technical lifeline. No server, no nothing. On occasions in the past, our server had a nervous breakdown which normally means that our work as such comes to a complete halt. Presumably the server failed because we do not have air conditioning in our office, but ultimately the reasons might rather have been that 22 team members are frantically accessing files, saving new information, sending and receiving hundreds of e-mails round the entire globe on a daily basis, hence, ... a server heat stroke. Does this sound familiar? So, in this respect we are not different from any "for profit" business operation. If you are looking for alternative ways of supporting us, please contact us. Thank you!

Thank you very much

You can imagine that the current economic crisis has taken its toll on charities around the world. We too can feel the pinch, our donation volume drops. All the more we appreciate every dollar received and we want to express our gratitude to all of you for standing by during these more difficult financial times. Thank you very much in the name of all our beneficiaries.

Your Child's Dream Team

